

# News Release

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## **State-of-the-art patient alert system for DCH**

Patients at Dorset County Hospital are set to benefit from a new hi-tech system which monitors their condition and immediately alerts their doctor if they are getting sicker.

Installation of the VitalPAC system will start over the next few months with the aim of having it up and running throughout the hospital by the autumn.

The system will enable nurses to record patients' vital signs electronically into handheld computers at the bedside rather than using a paper chart to record data such as pulse, temperature and blood pressure.

VitalPAC then automatically analyses this information, along with data such as blood test results stored in other hospital databases, and identifies priority patients using an early warning score. An urgent alert is given if the score reveals the patient to be in need of immediate medical attention.

Once the data has been recorded it can be assessed by any clinician from anywhere in the hospital.

Dr Andrew Ball, DCH's Clinical Director for Critical Care Services, said: "This system will ensure we identify deteriorating patients quickly throughout the hospital".

"It electronically allows patient observations to be inputted at the bedside. It then calculates an alert score and prompts the nurse as to the appropriate action to take. This means that concerns are escalated promptly and appropriately to the correct staff.

"The information can be accessed anywhere within the hospital so we will always know where the sickest patients are. It means we can pick up deteriorating patients earlier and ensure they receive appropriate treatment.

"It is a very user friendly system and is well-liked by staff in hospitals where it is already in use, so the implementation should be straightforward. We hope to have it up and running throughout the hospital by the autumn."

The system, designed by healthcare improvement specialist The Learning Clinic, will bring efficiency savings as well as benefits for patient safety. Time-consuming paper-based systems will be phased out and bed management will be improved as VitalPAC allows staff to quickly and easily see which patients are due to arrive in hospital and which are ready to go home.

It is also expected that the system will increase the accuracy of patient assessment. Studies have shown that with VitalPAC there are three times fewer errors in patient risk assessment than with traditional pen and paper methods.

Chris Milliner, The Learning Clinic's site manager for Dorset County Hospital, said: "When patients come into hospital, they want to know that they are always going to be monitored closely, fully and accurately. They want to know that if they get sicker, the change is going to be immediately identified and they are going to be quickly reviewed and treated by their doctor or a specialist. VitalPAC helps do all of that. It also means doctors and nurses spend less time filling in paperwork and more time with their patients. Quite simply, it improves patient care."

**ENDS**

**PHOTO 1: From left to right - Matron for Critical Care and Surgery Miles Tompkins, Clinical Director for Critical Care Services Dr Andrew Ball and Critical Care Consultant Nurse Sharon Mooney demonstrate the VitalPAC system to patient Walter Court.**

**PHOTO 2: an example screenshot on a VitalPAC handheld computer.**

**For more information or to arrange interview, photo and filming opportunities please contact Communications Manager Susie Palmer on 01305 254683, [susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:susie.palmer@dchft.nhs.uk) (Mon to Wed) or Stevie Pattison-Dick on 01305 255419, [stevie.pattison-dick@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:stevie.pattison-dick@dchft.nhs.uk) (Thurs and Fri).**